

Testimony of

**Christine Kelley**

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Before the

Education Committee

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee.

I testify today in support of House Bill 6884. This bill takes important steps toward addressing the educator shortage in Connecticut, showing educators that theirs is a respected profession, and ensuring that our classrooms and schools can provide the best possible education for our students.

I believe many parts of this bill are important to show respect to our public school teachers, however it leaves out a very important population, the teachers who were well into their careers and stuck it out through the pandemic. Why is there no provisions for teachers who worked through the pandemic and will retire before 2026? I am turning 65 in a few months and have taught for 25 years and was hoping to retire soon. I showed up for my job even though I was more at risk from COVID due to my age. Our school was remote March to June 2020 and we were back in person September 2020. I work in an elementary school where kids were not good at keeping masks on and I was at a greater risk of COVID due to my age. Teachers who had 20 years and were over 60 should also be eligible for the pandemic credit if they continued to teach through the pandemic. This bill should not be passed unless the pandemic credit portion is modified to acknowledge all teachers who served.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

